



Committee on **HOMELAND SECURITY** Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

March 21, 2011

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Statement of Chairman Peter T. King (R-NY) House Committee on Homeland Security

Committee on Homeland Security Hearing: "Iran, Hezbollah, and the Threat to the Homeland"

March 21, 2012

Remarks as Prepared

We meet today at a perilous time.

Since 9/11, America's counterterror officials have focused on finding Al Qaeda operatives inside America as well as homegrown radicalized Islamist extremists ready to perpetrate violence against our people.

Now, as Iran moves closer to nuclear weapons and there is increasing concern over war between Iran and Israel we must also focus on Iran's secret operatives and their number one terrorist proxy force, Hezbollah, which we know is in America. That's right! The question is whether these operatives have the capacity to carry out attacks in the homeland and how quickly they can become fully operational.

More than 20 federal investigations since 9/11 identified by the Majority's investigative staff offer a chilling view of Iranian and Hezbollah operations inside the U.S.

Today, our national interests – namely standing with our major ally Israel – increasingly puts us in the crosshairs of the extremist regime in Tehran as it

moves dangerously closer to making a nuclear bomb.

Iran is feeling the heat – and already has responded with its trademark terrorist brutality overseas. We have seen this before:

- In Beirut, 1983;
- Buenos Aires, 1992 and 1994;
- Khobar Towers, 1996;
- And, if Iran had its way, Washington, D.C., also would have witnessed terrible carnage amid the smoking ruins of a popular local restaurant only a few months ago.

Many counterterrorism insiders were stunned last October by Tehran's brazen plot by its intelligence service thugs to assassinate Saudi Arabia's ambassador by bombing this city, our nation's capital.

I congratulate the DEA and FBI for thwarting this attack on our capital.

Will Iran launch terror strikes inside our homeland if it feels threatened?

In light of last year's bomb plot, in light of the 20 Hezbollah cases prosecuted since 9/11, and in light of Hezbollah attacks overseas, we have a duty to prepare for the worst.

Today's investigative hearing is the beginning of this Committee's effort to size up this serious threat by one of international terrorism's most violent murder gangs.

How many Iranian and Hezbollah terrorists are here already?

The highly-disciplined soldiers of Hezbollah are trained to lie low for years – or decades.

Those who have gone up against this enemy for our government estimate the number to be – at a minimum – in the hundreds, according to preliminary findings of the Majority's investigative staff.

There also are 55 Iranian diplomats at its United Nations mission in New York and another 29 Iranian officials here at its interests section, according to the Obama Administration – many of whom, it must be presumed, are intelligence officers.

Several of their comrades were removed from the UN mission and sent back to Iran after the NYPD repeatedly caught them photographing the city's rail

systems in the years since 9/11.

Additionally, as the NYPD's Mitchell Silber points out, there have been five other events including the Iranian diplomatic personnel which almost certainly constituted hostile reconnaissance against New York.

Many have mistakenly assumed that Hezbollah operatives here were only capable of fundraising for the Lebanon-based group through criminal fraud such as counterfeiting and cigarette smuggling.

But top intelligence officials and leaders told the Majority's investigative staff that Hezbollah is the group most capable of flipping its nationwide network of criminal fundraising cells into an operational terror force capable of great violence on orders from its leaders in Lebanon or Iran. And in 2009, the Obama Administration said that Hezbollah is "the most technically capable terrorist group in the world."

Our witnesses will explain that many arrested on criminal charges since 9/11, such as Mahmoud Kourani, were Hezbollah militants trained in weapons, explosives and spycraft in Lebanon and Iran where the Revolutionary Guard Corps works hand in hand with Hezbollah.

Some defendants in cases have been known or suspected of having combat experience with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Their numbers also are greater than they may seem from looking at the federal docket since other suspected Hezbollah operatives were quietly deported as criminal aliens without their militant backgrounds being publicly disclosed.

As the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, recently said, Iran's leaders are under great pressure, and appear to be, quote: "More willing to conduct an attack inside the United States in response to real or perceived U.S. actions that threaten the regime."

We simply cannot afford to ignore this threat.

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